

SRI LANKA

SUPPORTING THE SRI LANKA POLICE TO UPHOLD SAFEGUARDS PROTECTING THE DIGNITY OF PEOPLE

JANUARY - APRIL 2019



The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) recognizes the vital role played by the Police in law enforcement to ensure public safety and the prevention and detection of crime.

To fulfil their mission law enforcement officials exercise basic powers like arrest, detention, search and seizure and the use of force and firearms. The way they exercise these powers can have a major impact on people. Their operations are then governed by national legislation that must be consistent with the State's international human rights obligations.

In keeping with its mandate to protect and assist people affected by conflict and violence, the ICRC sensitizes police forces on standards related to use of force, judicial guarantees and procedural safeguards, as well as humane treatment of persons arrested and conditions of detention. The ICRC also stresses that police forces should have a system for preventing, monitoring and if necessary punishing violations.

In Sri Lanka the ICRC conducts awareness sessions on international standards in policing, as part of the organization's mandate to help and protect people affected by conflict and violence. According to these, no person must be

arbitrarily arrested or detained. Moreover, there are safeguards in place to ensure that persons arrested are treated with dignity and humanity.

This year so far, the ICRC has continued detention visits and training sessions for newly recruited police constables at the Police Training College in Kalutara. We also reached a milestone by conducting a training session that was attended exclusively by female police constables.

We were also excited to kick start training sessions at the In-Service Training Academy for recently promoted Assistant Superintendents of Police. The session was conducted for 34 senior officers, as part of a crime investigation course.

Both the ICRC and the Sri Lanka Police realise the importance to carry out tailor-made training sessions. We anticipate these trainings to continue during the current year.

LAUNCH OF THE INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF THE RED CROSS – THE MISSING



The latest edition of the International Review of the Red Cross, titled “The Missing”, was launched during an event organized by the Colombo delegation of the ICRC on 29 March. To mark the occasion, we conducted a panel discussion with experts from across the world who delved into the theoretical and practical aspects of psychosocial support provided to the families of missing people.

Key note speaker Pauline Boss, a groundbreaking researcher on the concept of “ambiguous loss” spoke about this complicated type of loss that people experience when they do not know the fate and whereabouts of their missing loved ones. Among the panelists was Dr. Simon Robins, a humanitarian practitioner from the University of York, who spoke about the theoretical aspects underpinning the provision of psychosocial support for the families of the missing. Gameela Samarasinghe, a clinical psychologist from the University of Colombo and Dr. Maleeka Salih, a researcher and trainer, provided an overview of the article they co - authored for the Review, titled “Families of the Missing in Sri Lanka – Psychosocial Considerations in Transitional Justice Mechanisms”.



Ananda Galappatti, a medical anthropologist and mental health and psychosocial support practitioner shared his insights into the challenges and opportunities in the provision of mental health and psychological support to families of missing in Sri Lanka.

Maia Alkhazishvili, mental health and psychosocial support responsible at the ICRC in Tbilisi-Georgia, shared her experiences of working with families of the missing in Georgia and accompanying them during specific moments in the process of search and identification of human remains.

In Sri Lanka, the ICRC runs an accompaniment program to help families of missing people cope with the ambiguity of their loss. This program provides mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and some economic support. The families are referred to existing service providers for support with their legal and administrative needs. A photo exhibition featuring the positive impact of the program in Sri Lanka was also organized at the venue.



PROMOTING IHL AMONG UNDERGRADUATES OF LAW



The ICRC delegation in Colombo, together with the University of Colombo, has been conducting moot court competitions for undergraduates of law for nearly 15 years. They are organized every year as a part of the ICRC's drive to promote International Humanitarian Law (IHL) among academic circles. The competition is open to undergraduates who study law in State and private universities and law colleges in the country.

Last year, five teams from State universities and private law institutions took part in the 14th Henry Dunant Moot Court Competition that was held in Colombo. The team from the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo, became the national champions and the team from the Department of Law, University of Jaffna, were the runners up. Both teams qualified for the regional rounds of the competition in Tehran, Iran in December last year.



The team from the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo, comprising Prashanthini Vignanantha, Vishmi Yapa Abeywardena and Shelani Paliwardana qualified for the Asia Pacific round that was held in Hong Kong earlier this year. "We were thrilled to have qualified for the Asia Pacific rounds after a very competitive competition in Iran", they said. "The experience in Hong Kong was more exciting. Our efforts were sufficiently compensated when we progressed to the quarter finals. We were the only team from South Asia to reach this round and also won the award for Best Defendant Memorial in this moot".

The Faculty of Law team also participated in the Jean Pictet competition where students get the chance to have a hands-on experience in IHL application. It was the first time the ICRC sponsored a team from Sri Lanka to participate in this competition, which is held once every year in France. "This was a life changing experience. Putting IHL into practice was challenging and exciting at the same time. We enjoyed the simulations and learnt a great deal from all the tests. The experience was very different to our experience at moot courts and we loved the competition. These opportunities to moot has been a long but happy journey which has helped us to study IHL. Today, we stand as individuals who not only know the law but value the role of IHL in society".



FACTS & FIGURES

JANUARY – APRIL 2019



ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES OF MISSING PERSONS

Met **1112** families to follow up on their tracing enquiries, and registered **94** new cases of missing persons;
Provided (through the Accompaniment Program) weekly psychosocial support sessions to relatives of **694** missing persons, and referred **87** of them to the resources required for assistance with economic, legal and administrative, educational and health needs;
Gave **26** families cash grants to develop their livelihoods.



VISITING PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF FREEDOM

Conducted **28** visits in **18** places of detention throughout the country, and followed **128** detainees individually. Findings and recommendations from these visits were shared confidentially with prison authorities;
Supported travel allowance to facilitate **213** family visits to **95** detainees;
Provided **131** detainees ad hoc assistance to improve conditions of detention.



PROMOTION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW (IHL)

Conducted a four day training in advanced IHL for **20** officers from the Army, Navy and Special Task Force at the Institute for Peace Support Operations Training (IPSOT);
Delivered a presentation about ICRC humanitarian activities worldwide and in Sri Lanka to **34** non-commissioned officers following the advanced IHL instructor course at IPSOT;
Conducted two half day pre deployment UN Peacekeeping briefings to **80** army personnel to be deployed in Lebanon and to **11** doctors and nurses to be deployed at the Level **2** hospital in South Sudan;
Organized a two day IHL session for **27** Brigade Commanders and Battalion Commanders of the Security Forces Headquarters in Jaffna;
Conducted a three day seminar on IHL, Conduct of Hostilities, Peacekeeping, Law Enforcement and Post Conflict IHL for **160** Army, Navy and Air Force officers including representatives from Saudi Arabia, Rwanda, Sudan, Maldives, Malaysia, India, Oman, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, China, US and Indonesia at the Defence Services Command and Staff College;
Delivered a session on IHL as part of the flagship course at the Officers Career Development Centre in Buttala to more than **120** officers of varying rank.
Carried out a one day program on use of force, arrest seizure, detention and judicial guarantees for over **140** newly recruited police constables, including Tamil police constables and **45** newly promoted Assistant Superintendents of Police at the Police College in Kalutara;
Organized a one day program on use of force, arrest, detention and judicial guarantees for **33** criminal investigation officers at the National Police Academy.
Sponsored three participants to attend the **33rd** South Asia Teaching session on IHL (SATS) which was held in Nepal and one of them took part in a panel discussion on Sexual Violence and Conflict.



SUPPORT TO THE SRI LANKA RED CROSS SOCIETY (SLRCS)

Six first aid services were delivered by the Gampaha, Trincomalee, Matale, Ratnapura, Nuwara Eliya and Kilinochchi SLRCS district branches at a range of events;
286 volunteers developed their first aid skills by attending an island wide basic first aid exam;
As many as **88** staff and volunteers from SLRCS district branches received training in disaster response techniques;
14 dissemination sessions on the humanitarian principles and the Red Cross Red Crescent movement were delivered by SLRCS Kalutara, Hambantota, Galle, Matara, Mannar and Puttlam district branches to students, youth members, teachers and government officers.

International Committee of the Red Cross
29, Layards Road, Colombo 05
Sri Lanka
T: +94 (11) 250 33 46 F: +94 (11) 250 33 48
E-mail: colombo@icrc.org www.icrc.org/lk
Cover Photo: ICRC
© ICRC, January 2019

Vavuniya office
70, Vairavar Kovil Road
Vairavarpuliyankulam
Vavuniya
T: +94 (0)24 222 28 55
F: +94 (0)24 222 25 37

Batticaloa office
Manresa Road
Kothukulam, Pillayaredi
Batticaloa
T: +94 (0)65 222 70 70



ICRC

facebook.com/icrc
 twitter.com/icrc
 instagram.com/icrc